

Case Study

Yes on Proposition 78/No on Proposition 79 Campaign

Campaign Activities, Media Relations, Coalition-Building

SUMMARY: The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) retained Cerrell Associates, Inc. (CAI) to direct all Southern California campaign, media and outreach activities for the Yes on Proposition 78/No on Proposition 79 Campaign. Both measures were on the ballot for the November 2005 California Special Election. After making considerable efforts to work with the state legislature to draft a comprehensive, bipartisan discount prescription drug plan, PhRMA qualified Proposition 78 for the ballot to offer prescription drugs at the lowest commercial price for approximately 6 million uninsured/low-income Californians.

Another prescription drug discount plan, Proposition 79, was placed on the ballot by health advocates and labor organizations in order to force drug manufacturers to provide discounted drugs to many Californians who already had prescription drug coverage.

CAI, in conjunction with a statewide team of consultants, was directed to develop a statewide communications strategy to mobilize and educate key stakeholders and California's electorate on the significant differences between the competing propositions. Defeating Proposition 79 was the campaign's highest priority.

CAI successfully designed and implemented an aggressive coalition-building campaign that contributed to the creation of a diverse coalition of more than 175 organizations, including: healthcare advocates, taxpayer and business groups, minority groups, and political and community organizations.

Covering six Southern California counties (Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, Riverside, San Bernardino, Santa Barbara), encompassing approximately 50% of California's population, CAI directed all earned media activities in Southern

California's media markets, acting as the campaign's spokespeople and orchestrating numerous media events.

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify and engage key stakeholder groups, representing the business, healthcare, taxpayer and political communities and encourage them to oppose Proposition 79 and support Proposition 78.
- Build a diverse coalition of organizations that would inform their constituents about the differences between the two competing initiatives, with a focus on the negative consequences Proposition 79 would have for California's neediest.
- Educate the news media and the electorate on the success of programs identical to Proposition 78 in other states, while pointing out Proposition 79's flaws.

ACTIVITIES:

CAI devised and directed all outreach and media activities in six Southern California counties, through our extensive contacts in the media, in-person meetings and presentations to leading advocacy organizations. Using our extensive in-house databases, CAI compiled a list of 677 advocacy organizations to approach for endorsements and/or voter outreach opportunities.

Throughout the campaign, CAI scheduled and participated in presentations with varying business, social and political groups to explain the differences between Propositions 78 and 79.

CAI engaged thousands of voters by speaking at more than 70 group meetings and voter education forums across Southern California. The turnout at the events varied with type and location. Debate format events drew the largest audiences; other events drew smaller crowds comprised of high-probability voters. CAI also made several radio and television appearances, which in turn reached a wider voting audience. Ultimately, CAI persuaded 45 groups to either support Proposition 78 and/or oppose Proposition 79.

Acting as the media spokespeople for the campaign, CAI garnered top tier coverage for the campaign. CAI briefed Southern California reporters and editors throughout the election cycle.

We provided concise information to television, radio and print media about the propositions to distinguish the impacts of Propositions 78 and 79.

Leading up to Election Day, CAI led the planning and execution of three media events in Southern California. Two press conferences that focused on support for Proposition 78 from the Latino, medical and business communities. The third event provided counter arguments and visuals to the media attending a Yes on 79/No on 78 campaign press conference. CAI also scheduled and participated in editorial board meetings, gave interviews, and drafted a number of editorials and letters to the editor for local media placement.

RESULTS:

Proposition 79 was defeated by 22 points (39% to 61%). CAI successfully added 45 organizations and elected officials to the statewide Proposition 79 opposition list. Of the four editorial board meetings led by CAI (*Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles Newspaper Group, Los Angeles Daily News, Press Telegram of Long Beach*), all four editorialized in opposition to Proposition 79, with the *Los Angeles Newspaper Group* supporting Proposition 78. Additionally, CAI achieved significant media coverage for three media events and successfully placed multiple letters to the editor in leading regional publications.

